



MINUTES
OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
Regular Meeting
January 20, 2009

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. Reg Dexter, District V, Council Chairman
Mr. Joel Thrift, District IV, Vice Chairman
Mr. Mario Suarez, District III, Chairman Pro Tem
Mr. George Blanchard District I
Mr. Wayne McCall, District II

Oconee County Council met on Tuesday, January 20, 2009 at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Dale K. Surrett, Thomas L. Martin County Attorney and Elizabeth G. Hulse, Clerk to Council present.

Press:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeese.com/council]. In addition it was made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Member of the press present: Ray Chandler – Anderson Independent, Dick Mangrum - WGOG Radio & Carlos Galarza - Daily Journal.

Call to Order:

Mr. Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mr. Surrett led the pledge of allegiance to the United States Flag.

Introduction of New Staff:

Mr. Dexter recognized and introduced Mr. Thomas L. Martin to those present.

Mr. Surrett noted that the introduction of Ms. Crosby would be deferred to the next meeting to be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2009.

Minutes:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 5 – 0 that the minutes from the January 6, 2009 regular meeting be adopted as printed.

Public Comment Session:

Mr. Jerry Barnett addressed Council regarding his opposition to the Zoning Enabling Ordinance and previous Council's wasting of taxpayer money.

Mr. Larry Linsin addressed Council regarding his support for the extension of the public comment session to four minutes.

Mr. Mike Wright addressed Council regarding his concerns about agenda items #13-2 and #13-3.

Mr. Frank Kieninger Oconee Men's Outreach addressed Council regarding the groups continued prayers for Council members. Mr. Kieninger also presented Council members with a letter, desk card and wallet card [filed with these minutes].

Ms. Donna Linsin addressed Council regarding her concerns that Council is too closely tied to outside organizations such as Oconee Alliance and that these organizations made up of individuals not elected by the people are planning and making decisions for the county.

Mr. Luther Lyle addressed Council regarding his concern that the updated county map. He provided Council with a handout [filed with these minutes] outlining the history and work done to date. Discussion took place between Mr. Lyle, Mr. Surrett and some council members. No action was taken.

Mr. Gary Littlefield addressed Council regarding the public comment session asking that Council enforce the guideline stating that comments be specifically related to agenda items for discussion at the meeting.

Mr. Bill Orr addressed Council regarding the Lake Yonah property tax issues [specifics to be addressed in the Extended Public Comment Session portion of the minutes].

Mr. Berry Nichols addressed Council regarding his opposition to approving agenda item #13-2, operating hours for the Welcome Center and extension of the public comment session.

Extended Public Comment Session:

Mr. Tony Tescon & Mr. Bill Turk / Lake Yonah lease holders of Georgia Power property discussion related to Oconee County tax assessments:

Mr. Tony Tescon and Mr. Bill Turk addressed Council regarding concerns about tax assessment bills received for a three year period [to include penalties and fines]. Mr. Tescon provided Council with a brief history; noting that contact had been made previously with the Assessor's office regarding possible taxes. [A letter with this information and their request for the tax assessments to be waived is filed with these minutes]. He stated that they had been told by a previous Assessor that property taxes were not due as services were not provided. Mr. Tescon asked that Council consider at a minimum waiving the back taxes but hopefully all property taxes for these leased lots.

Mr. Bill Turk added that it is the feeling of the Lake Yonah residents that the tax assessments are both punitive and excessive. Discussion followed.

It was determined that the residents of Lake Yonah had a scheduled hearing before the Oconee County Board of Assessment Appeals scheduled for later in the week and that no action would be taken by Council as this Board is the appropriate venue for these questions/concerns.

AT&T Check Presentation to Council / \$130,000:

Mr. Jim Evers, Regional Director for AT&T, presented Mr. Reg Dexter, Council Chairman, with a check for \$130,000 which is designated to assist in economic development projects in Oconee County. Mr. Ever noted that the only stipulation on the use of these funds would be that they can not be used for anything related to telecommunications. Mr. Dexter accepted the check and thanked AT&T for their contribution.

Motion / Vote regarding Appointment of Council Committees by Council Chairman:

Mr. Dexter noted that it had been brought to his attention that the appointments to Council Committees had been announced at the last meeting but that the appropriate vote was not taken. Mr. Dexter noted that one change would be made to the announcements made at the January 6, 2009 meeting to the Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee; removing Mr. Dexter and adding Mr. Thrift.

Mr. Blanchard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to approve the appointments to the Council Committees as outlined at both the January 6, 2009 and tonight's meetings.

Appointment of Council Representatives to Boards:

Upstate Alliance Board of Directors:

Mr. Dexter announced that after discussion with Mr. Blanchard that it was agreed that Mr. Dexter would serve as the Council representative to this board.

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall, approved 4 – 0 [Mr. Dexter abstained] to appoint Mr. Reg Dexter as the Council representative to the Upstate Alliance Board of Directors.

Resolutions for Consideration:

Resolution 2009-01:

Mr. Surrett noted that Ms. Lombard was not present for the reading of the Resolution as her brother was hospitalized. He asked that this be deferred to the February 3, 2009 meeting. Council concurred.

Items for Consideration by Council:

ATAX / \$1,404.50 / Waterfall Poster Framing:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Thrift, approved 5 – 0 to approve \$1,404.50 to be spent to frame approximately 25 Waterfall Posters for distribution in the hospitality industry and high tourist traffic areas.

Procurement / Sheriff's Department / \$58,452.00 / Three 2009 Chevy Impala Sedans:

Mr. Surrett briefly outlined the request for three 2009 Chevrolet Impala sedans to be utilized by school resource officers. Mr. McCall asked to be recognized. He invited Sheriff James Singleton and Captain Terry Wilson to step forward to address this request. Sheriff Singleton stated that he felt during the budget process for FY 2008-2009 that he was mandated to purchase specific vehicles and that he was not allowed to use his experience and knowledge to select vehicles on his

own. He and Captain Wilson stated that these vehicles were not needed at this time by the Sheriff's Department. Lengthy discussion took place regarding vehicle requirements for the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. McCall to allow the Sheriff latitude to purchase Crown Victoria vehicles [and one F150 truck] with the stipulation that they adhere to the Procurement procedures for the state contract and to stay within FY 2008-2009 budget.

Procurement / Emergency Services Department / \$34,487,310 / 90 Motorola CP Radios:

Mr. Surrett briefly outlined the request for 90 Motorola CP 200 portable radios to be used as part of the communications system with the new self contained breathing apparatus. Mr. McCall asked to be recognized. He stated that he had spoken with an individual after his review of this request and that he had identified a potential source to obtain these radios at a reduced cost. Discussion followed.

Mr. Surrett withdrew his request for consideration for the purchase of these radios at this time.

Procurement / Emergency Services Department / \$34,487,310 / 90 Motorola CP Radios:

Mr. Surrett briefly outlined the request for 90 Motorola CP 200 portable radios to be used as part of the communications system with the new self contained breathing apparatus. Mr. McCall asked to be recognized. He stated that he had spoken with an individual after his review of this request and that he had identified a potential source to obtain these radios at a reduced cost [copies provided to all members and filed with these minutes].

Mr. Blanchard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez to approve purchase of these radios. Discussion followed. Mr. Suarez withdrew his second to the motion. Additional discussion followed.

Mr. Surrett withdrew his request for consideration for the purchase of these radios at this time.

Procurement / RFP 08-14 / Emergency Services / \$30,000 / Emergency Operations Plan [EOP]:

Mr. Surrett briefly outlined the need to convert the current EOP [written in Annex format] so that our Emergency Services staff can communicate with the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the SC Emergency Management Division. To stay in line with state and federal operating plans, the County's existing EOP, must be converted to the required new format. Additionally, this will allow Oconee County to be eligible to receive future grants that relate to Emergency Management. Lengthy discussion followed. Mr. Surrett withdrew his request for approval of RFP 08-14 at this time. Mr. Rodney Burdette addressed Council to answer questions regarding the need for this conversion. Additional discussion followed.

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to award RFP 08-14 to Consequence Management, LLC of Simpsonville, SC in an amount up to \$30,000 for the conversion of the EOP. Additionally, the County Administrator is authorized to execute the contract documents.

SDOC Building Donation:

Mr. Surrett briefly outlined the School Districts request to accept a donation of the white building owned by the SDOC. Mr. Surrett provided a draft letter for Council's approval regarding acceptance of the building. Lengthy discussion followed.

Mr. Surrett withdrew his request for acceptance of the SDOC Building located on Short Street. Council requested that Mr. Surrett follow up with the SDOC Board Chair as they wish to formally offer the building prior to Council's consideration for acceptance.

Emergency Services / Request to apply for FY 09 EOC Grant:

Mr. Surrett briefly outlined the specifics of the grant request for Council. Discussion followed.

Mr. Thrift made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to authorize the Emergency Services Department to apply for the FY 09 EOC Grant.

Council Committee Reports:

Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health & Welfare Committee:

Mr. McCall stated that the committee met on Monday and received input from the public regarding Emergency Services in Oconee County.

Mr. Thrift stated that he spoke with the City of Westminster Fire Chief and administration and that a workshop meeting will be scheduled next week.

Planning & Economic Development Committee:

Mr. Dexter announced a joint workshop meeting with the Planning Commission to be held on Wednesday, January 28, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. to discuss portions of the Zoning Enabling Ordinance. Mr. Dexter requested that the County Attorney, County Administrator and a representative from the Planning Department also attend this workshop.

Commission / Board Reports to Council:

There were no reports presented at this meeting.

Board & Commission Appointments:

Emergency Management Commission:

Mr. Blanchard made a motion, seconded by Mr. Suarez, approved 5 – 0 to appoint Mr. Tom Stults, PO Box 131, Long Creek, SC 29658, to the District I seat on the Emergency Management Commission.

Mr. Dexter stated that the District V seat is currently open. He requested interested candidates contact him regarding the open seat.

Library Board:

Mr. Suarez made a motion, seconded by Mr. Blanchard, approved 5 – 0 to appoint Mr. R. Daniel Day, Seneca, to the District III seat on the Oconee County Library Board.

Administrator's Report:

Tammy Sanders / Assessor's Office:

Mr. Surrett noted that Ms. Tammy Sanders in the Assessor's Office was killed in a single car accident over the past weekend. Ms. Sanders leaves behind a husband and two small children all of who were not injured in the accident. He noted that visitation will be Wednesday, January 21, 2009 and services will be held Thursday, January 22, 2009.

Roads & Bridges Department:

Mr. Surrett noted that an article had been provided to Council in their packs outlining some of the issues related to a recent storm and the response from the Roads & Bridges Department.

Old Business:

Lobby Days:

Mr. Dexter reminded all members that the SCAC Lobby Day is Tuesday, January 27, 2009 and that information should have been mailed to their homes regarding the schedule for the day.

New Business:

Upstate Alliance / Date for Workshop:

Mr. Dexter reminded those present that this workshop meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

“Strategic Response to Economic Times” Teleconference:

Mr. Blanchard noted that he had received information regarding the teleconference to be held on Thursday, February 19, 2009 between 9A-12 noon. Mr. Surrett noted that the Human Resources Director will record and make available the full teleconference to any interested council members.

Red Cross Request for Funding:

Mr. Blanchard noted that he received a funding request letter from Ms. Kathy Rogers with the local chapter of the American Red Cross. Discussion followed. It was the consensus of Council to invite Ms. Roger to attend the next Council meeting to outline her organizations needs.

Discussion of Extension of Public Comment from Three to Four Minutes:

Mr. Dexter stated that he agreed with earlier Public Comment regarding this issue. In addition, he stated that adherence to specific agenda items will in the future be enforced as the Public Comment session is designed to receive input from the public regarding specific county business to be addressed at the meeting. Discussion followed.

It was the consensus of Council that the Clerk to Council draft a new sign in sheet for Public Comment to include both the person’s name and the specific agenda item that they wish to address with Council. The new four minute, agenda specific format will being with the first meeting in February 2009.

Adjourn:

Mr. Blanchard made a motion at 9:10 p.m., seconded by Mr. Thrift that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted:

Elizabeth G. Hulse
Clerk to Council